

Telecom outsourcing project to include data center

The Converged Communications Outsourcing Project (CCOP) now includes the acquisition of a new data center facility, and project implementation dates have also been revised.

The purchase of a facility that will house the state data center will be made in conjunction with CCOP, which addresses the state's need for local, long distance and wireless phone service; high-speed data access; video and two-way radio. Data center services are not part of the procurement, and data center staff will remain state employees.

"Considering these procurements at the same time will enable the state to obtain better overall value for both," said Larry J. Singer, state CIO and Executive Director of the Georgia Technology Authority, which is managing the procurement. Combining the two projects also will lessen the impact of the economic downturn on funds available for telecom and avoid giving an advantage to any of the vendors who are competing for both projects.

Contract to be signed by year's end

GTA expects to sign a 10-year contract with the successful vendor in fall 2002. At that time, the state will pay for and take ownership of the data center, which will be financed through an \$18 million bond package approved recently by the Georgia General Assembly. The vendor will assume operation of state telecommunications on July 1, 2003. State workers outsourced as part of CCOP will be employed by the vendor effective May 1, 2003. The RFP's employment and benefits provisions affecting state employees remain the same.



CCOP will make it easier for public safety workers to contact each other across functional and jurisdictional boundaries, an essential ability in today's security-conscious world.

Since the implementation date is later than originally projected, GTA will reconsider state agency IT requests that were postponed or not approved because of CCOP. GTA will work with agencies to meet their priority needs.

Upon signing the contract, the vendor will immediately begin two critical projects: providing the capacity for Georgia Public Broadcasting to transmit signals digitally as required by the Federal Communications Commission and building an

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IT strategic planning: what it reveals about your agency

During the next few months, staff from GTA and state agencies will be meeting to take a look at their IT strategic plans, sifting through matrices to find the meaning they hold for the work agencies do and how IT can support it.

Agencies prepared the plans last year as part of the Consolidated Strategic Planning Process. After initial reviews of the IT plans, GTA worked to determine how to respond in a way that would be most helpful to agencies.

GTA found the plans to be full of quality information. "Agencies worked very hard and did very commendable jobs," said Shawn Whitney, strategic planner for GTA. "Because of the time and work they invested, we wanted to give each plan a thorough and individual review. Agencies deserve a response in kind with the effort they put into this."

At first blush, the matrices may look like little more than randomly filled-in blocks, but they can offer agency leaders and staff insight into their business. Through individual sessions, GTA staff help agencies see both anomalies and opportunities. For example, a plan may show that several organizational areas are performing similar tasks that could be supported by a single IT resource. It may also reveal that an agency is spending significant effort on activities that will not help achieve its objectives.

The reviews focus on four main themes:

- the interaction of business functions, subject areas and information needs;
- opportunities for sharing IT resources within an agency;
- prioritization of IT projects and initiatives; and
- overall balance.

"We want agencies to be able to take our feedback and then do their own analysis," Ms. Whitney said, "because in the end, they have to own the plan. GTA's review does not focus on whether the strategic direction is right or wrong, but we can make observations and assessments to help agencies ensure that IT effectively supports their business."

Jim Bricker, planner for the **Department of Human Resources**, said the strategic planning process has helped his agency refine a long-standing IT goal—linking its data systems. "The process has guided us in defining ways to integrate systems to share information to assist our staff and the people we serve," Mr. Bricker said. "The work is long and time-consuming, but well worth it in the long run."

The work being done in individual agency sessions over the coming months will serve as a foundation for the new strategic plans due June 30. GTA has streamlined the guidelines for the IT portion, deleting some parts and making the process less burdensome for agencies. Ms. Whitney said the newly published and distributed guidelines will enable most agencies to concentrate on refining their current plans. In addition, GTA will offer continuing education courses on IT planning.

Response from agencies has been positive. "Several people have told me they've been surprised by how much the matrices have shown them about what they do," Ms. Whitney said. ■

FCC change boosts charges for some telecom customers

GTA telecommunications customers, primarily in areas outside metropolitan Atlanta, are seeing an increase in their telephone charges as a result of a recent change by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC).

The FCC increased the amount that local phone companies may charge to recover some of the operating costs associated with local telephone networks. The higher charges were reflected in agencies' telecommunications bills beginning March 1, 2002.

The FCC's Interstate Access Reform Order of November 2001 authorized an increase to subscriber line charges beginning January 1, 2002.

GTA absorbed the increase for January and February.

BellSouth did not increase its subscriber line charges, so the change to customers' bills affects business, dormitory and Centrex lines in areas primarily outside metropolitan Atlanta that are served by other telephone companies.

The line rate for GTA telecom customers, which includes subscriber line charges, increased by \$1.50 for each dormitory line and \$2.75 to \$3.25 for each business and Centrex line, depending on the amount the local telephone company charges GTA.

If you have questions, please contact your GTA account manager. ■

Across the nation, disaster preparedness has taken on a different meaning since September 11. While the attacks on America underscored the importance of planning for disaster recovery, many state agencies were already preparing themselves.

GTA, in partnership with the **Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA)**, is helping state agencies with plans to ensure that critical business functions continue in the event of a natural disaster or acts of terrorism. Top priority is given to recovery of essential public safety, health and financial functions.

GTA also has engaged an outside firm that specializes in disaster recovery planning to assist agencies. "We're pleased to be able to offer this expertise as an added resource for agencies and to establish a uniform set of recovery plans," said Larry Bray, GTA information security program manager.

"We meet with commissioners and their staffs, and they tell us the recovery concerns that keep them up at night," Mr. Bray said. "We help them define their response to an emergency by identifying their critical functions, recovery objectives, and plans for communications, recovery of vital records and data, and alternate locations for work and IT processing."

While agencies that did extensive planning for Y2K may use those plans as a starting point, Mr. Bray said that maintaining disaster recovery plans is an ongoing process.

"These plans need to be living, working documents that you update as part of your standard business procedures," he said.

Copies of the plans will be maintained by the agencies in a central repository, with hard copies kept on site for immediate access.

"In cooperation with GEMA, we began with the Governor's office and several key agencies, including the departments of Motor Vehicle Safety, Defense, Human Resources, Revenue and Public Safety," Mr. Bray said, "and we will expand the effort during 2002."

For assistance or more information, agencies can contact Mr. Bray at 404-463-7379 or their account manager. ■

Preparing for any emergency

More than 2,000 public safety workers from throughout the state recently took part in seminars on emergency preparedness conducted by the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA) and GTA.

Among the presenters was Walter Tong (below), a member of GTA's security team,

who discussed some of the key steps state and local governments can take to maintain essential operations in an emergency. He focused on how agencies can assess their vulnerabilities and identify potential



GTA's Walter Tong discusses business continuity during a seminar on emergency preparedness.

terrorist targets. He offered expert tips on applying countermeasures to protect important public services.

Five seminars were held at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center in Forsyth. To view Mr. Tong's presentation, entitled "Continuity of Government and Business," visit: <http://167.192.62.166:8080/ramgen/gema/GEMA-EPP-Gov-Business.rm>.

Web site helps state agencies find temporary IT workers

A Web site activated by the state makes it quick and easy for agencies to find temporary IT professionals to supplement their information technology staffs. GTA, which oversees the procurement of IT resources for state government, signed a contract last summer with Venturi Partners, Inc. (formerly Personnel Group of America, Inc.) to operate the Web site and an automated system for managing temporary IT staff.

The system reduces work for agencies and makes it easier for small companies to compete for state business.

Agencies go to the Web site to submit the skills, prior experience and related requirements they're looking for in an IT professional. Venturi Partners compares the requirements to a pool of ready candidates and submits at least three for the agency's consideration within 72 hours. The agency can then interview the candidates or ask for additional candidates if none meet their expectations. Venturi Partners screens all candidates to verify education, work history and references before adding them to the pool.

The management system reduces administrative work for government agencies in other ways. Agency managers review and approve timesheets for temporary IT workers online. An agency receives only one itemized monthly bill from Venturi Partners for all its temporary IT workers, and payment options include electronic transfers. Venturi Partners provides agencies with training to use the Web site and online processes.

The system also makes it easier for small companies and individuals to compete for state business. They are able to submit information about their services over the Web to Venturi Partners and avoid the time and expense of marketing to each agency. Venturi Partners works directly with them to verify all information.

The Web site is available to all state agencies and local governments in Georgia at www.gtasms.com. ■

What's your IT IQ?

Are you up to speed on today's hot IT issues and initiatives? See how well you can answer the following questions. The correct answers are listed below. If you'd like to submit your own questions, send them to gtainfo@gtga.ga.gov.

1. The new Georgia portal will NOT

- a. allow users to create their own personal government portal
- b. allow different state computer systems to share information
- c. maintain a data base of information from different state computer systems
- d. make use of most existing systems and applications

2. Which of these are important IT security measures?

- a. developing a business continuity plan
- b. frequently updating anti-virus software
- c. developing privacy standards for electronically stored information
- d. security awareness training for employees

3. What percentage of large IT projects are successful?

- a. 10%
- b. 25%
- c. 50%
- d. 75%

Answers

1 = C. The portal will not build a separate database of information about Georgians from state computer systems. Instead, it will connect those systems and allow them to share information, and then present the information in one place for the user. The portal will be "intention-based," enabling users to customize it according to their own needs and interests. Technology used for the portal also will help the state extend the life and capability of its existing computer systems and avoid the expense of wholesale systems replacement.

2 = A,B,C,D. Protecting hardware, software and the information they store and planning for disaster recovery are essential to security. Equally important is ensuring that employees receive training on policy standards and know how to treat electronically-stored information appropriately.

3 = B. Only about a quarter of all large IT projects are totally successful, meaning that they are on time, on budget, and achieve the desired functionality, quality and performance. Among projects that fail — 75% of large IT projects — the primary reason is most often inadequate project management. ■

Learning has taken on a new dimension for students at Henderson Middle School in Jackson. They are among almost 5,000 other students at eight middle schools across Georgia who crossed the digital divide when each received a laptop computer, thanks to a new state-funded wireless schools pilot project.

Governor Roy E. Barnes visited the school last fall to see firsthand how computers are transforming the way students learn. "This goes beyond putting laptops in classrooms," said Governor Barnes,

who included the project as one of his budget initiatives this fiscal year. "The potential benefit for teachers, students and parents is enormous. Schools using this kind of Internet-based instruction, like Towns County Comprehensive School, have seen test scores and attendance go up, absenteeism fall and parent involvement increase."

The impact of the project will be studied in the eight schools selected to participate. The goal of the three-year pilot is improved student performance and test scores. It is supported by \$10 million from lottery funds.

NetSchools, the vendor selected to install wireless networks and provide laptops and technical support for teachers and students, also provides lesson plan content and software correlated to Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum. Ongoing professional development and support is another essential feature of the program. School personnel and teachers learned about the program and materials last summer. Students and parents were introduced to the program last fall.

GTA is overseeing the project. State CIO and GTA Executive Director Larry J. Singer sees technology as "a teaching enabler. Internet instruction enhances teaching and learning. It's an exciting way of delivering content, and we think this type of mobile wireless solution is cost effective as well." ■



Governor Barnes with a student at Henderson Middle School in Jackson who received a laptop as part of the state's three-year wireless classroom pilot project. It promises to transform the way students learn and improve their school performance.

Eight middle schools jump to head of the class

The **Student Data and Research Center**, a unit of the **Georgia Institute of Technology**, developed evaluation criteria and selected the schools to participate in the wireless schools pilot project. The participating schools are Early County Middle School, Blakely; Henderson Middle School, Jackson; Hilsman Middle School, Athens; Louisville Middle School, Louisville; Marshall Middle School, Columbus; Rossville Middle School, Rossville; Treutlen Middle School, Soperton; and W. L. Parks Middle School, Atlanta.

Agencies share technology solutions through innovative learning program

The Georgia Technology Authority launched the opening session of the Georgia Digital Academy on March 20. In response to feedback from numerous state agencies, the 10-week pilot is focusing on document management.

"The academy will be a catalyst for state agencies to address their common needs in the area of digital government."

— Robert Woodruff

The Academy is an innovative learning program sponsored by GTA to bring state agencies together to develop technical solutions to common business problems and share lessons learned.

Southern Polytechnic State University in Marietta has been selected to create and manage the Academy. Southern Polytechnic is nationally recognized for its technology and science programs, many of which are designed especially for nontraditional students.

"The academy will be a catalyst for state agencies to address their common needs in the area of digital government," said Robert Woodruff, who leads GTA's Office of Technology. Participants will take part in educational and training programs, including opportunities to obtain professional certification in specific technologies. They will also help identify best practices and set standards for hardware, software and systems architecture to be used throughout state government.

GTA held briefing sessions in February and March for information technology and program

managers in state agencies so they could learn about the Academy and the pilot session.

State agencies participating in the pilot are actively planning a document management project. Document management is about using computerized systems to manage electronic and paper documents together.

Participating agencies review each other's document management project and select one for the group to work on as a team. The project chosen must broadly represent the needs of the participating agencies.

Participants meet one day each week for eight hours. The educational phase of the pilot includes an overview of document management and an assessment of current technology. The pilot also includes a process to certify participants in document management technology.

Participants will return to their agencies and move forward with the projects they initially brought to the academy. They will form a user's group and meet on a regular basis to keep the standards and certification process up to date. The user's group will be available to provide assistance as members implement projects in their respective agencies.

Southern Polytechnic will be responsible for sharing information with state agencies about the academy's goals and session topics, identifying and registering session participants, developing session schedules and topic descriptions, providing meeting locations, and facilitating all sessions. ■

Partnership with DTAE strengthens customer service skills

More than 30 employees from GTA's Customer Service, Directory Assistance and Help Desk operations recently completed a six-week course in customer service conducted in collaboration with the **Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE)**.

Four of these employees are continuing their training by taking part in DTAE's Certified Customer Service Specialist Program. From January through September 2002, they are attending weekly two-hour classes on such topics as today's service industry environment, personal effectiveness, and customer contact, computer and business skills.

When they successfully complete the nine-month course, participants will receive a certificate

designating them as customer service specialists. They will also receive 15 quarter hours of credit through DTAE that can be applied toward a technical certificate.

"The Directory Assistance team is unanimous in saying the training has helped them to provide better service to customers," said Candy Kidd, who oversees Directory Assistance and also leads GTA's account managers. She says employees are taking greater pride in their work following the training and demonstrating an enhanced level of professionalism.

"DTAE has been a valued partner in assisting GTA in its efforts to enhance professional training for employees," Ms. Kidd added. ■

Advisory group helps guide portal development

A newly established Portal Advisory Group is addressing major policy and process issues associated with creating a state government portal.

The advisory group's initial members include **Commissioner Tim Burgess of the Department of Motor Vehicle Safety (DMVS)** and **Commissioner Jim Martin of the Department of Human Resources (DHR)**, whose programs will be the first to use the portal. Joining them are **Renay Blumenthal, policy director for the Office of the Governor**, and **Bill Tomlinson, director of the Office of Planning and Budget**. Membership on the group will rotate, and other agencies will be asked to serve.

The advisory group plays a critical role in fostering coordination among state agencies in developing the portal, setting policy and serving as a forum for resolving questions about roles and responsibilities.

At its first meeting on February 1, the advisory group discussed the portal's look and feel, referring to how it would appear to users and how they would navigate the site to find information and services.

Sun Microsystems and its subcontractor, EZ Gov, were chosen in December 2001 to integrate the technical components needed to make the portal work. GTA is also working with the **Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism** on the portal's look and feel.

Changing how the state delivers information and services

The portal will fundamentally change how the state delivers information and services—not just by the Internet but also by phone and mail—and how government agencies interact with each other and with citizens. By organizing government information around tasks and subject areas, the portal will make it quick and easy for citizens to find the information or service they need, even if they have little or no knowledge of government's organizational structure.

The first phase of the portal will give Georgians the ability to renew a driver's license online, by phone or mail and to complete other transactions without appearing in person at a DMVS office. Phase one will be implemented by July 1, 2002. ■

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infrastructure that will allow interoperable, two-way radio for law enforcement agencies.

The new implementation dates will give vendors additional time to consider updated financial projections for the amount of state funding available for CCOP. Since the release of the RFP on October 22, 2001, GTA and state budget officials have continued to refine their estimate of state agency expenditures for the services covered by CCOP. The most recent figures place the annual average at \$182.3 million.

Governor lends his support

Governor Roy E. Barnes recently reconfirmed his administration's support for the project. "We remain excited about the opportunity for an unparalleled partnership with industry to make Georgia a leader in converged communications and to establish a new model for other states."

GTA has received written notice from two pre-qualified vendors confirming their intent to respond to the RFP. They are MCI WorldCom Communications, Inc., and Connect Georgia, a bid team composed of BellSouth, AT&T, Electronic Data Systems and Lockheed Martin. Three other vendors—Motorola, TRW and Science Applications International Corporation—have also pre-qualified to bid as prime contractors. ■

Revised CCOP timeline

- **June 17, 2002**
Proposals due
- **November-December 2002**
Contract signed, state takes ownership of data center
- **January 2003**
Vendor begins work on initial projects
- **May 1, 2003**
Vendor employs outsourced state workers
- **July 1, 2003**
Implementation begins, vendor assumes operation of state telecommunications



PC purchasing alliance offers savings

How did a deep-South state like Georgia end up as part of an organization called the Western States Contracting Alliance (WSCA)?

As the name implies, WSCA was formed by 15 western states when their purchasing officers shrewdly realized how much clout they could exert on PC manufacturers if they worked together to obtain lower prices. Recognizing a good thing when we see it, GTA asked WSCA last year to allow Georgia to participate in the alliance, and its membership agreed.

Georgia state agencies and even local governments can now combine their purchasing power with more than 17 other states throughout the U.S.

Discounts vary by vendor and number of computers purchased, but they usually range from 3 to 6 percent below prices available on Georgia's existing statewide contracts with the same vendors. Additional discounts are offered when the cumulative dollar amount of personal computers purchased by all participating states reaches predetermined levels.

Complete information about purchasing computers through WSCA—including price lists, ordering instructions and a schedule of discounts—is available to state agencies and local governments on the microcomputer and peripherals Web site at <http://gacontracts.doas.state.ga.us/apps/purchasing/contracts.nsf/menus/MCP>. ■

Governor names new board members

Governor Barnes has appointed three new members to three-year terms on the GTA Board of Directors.

Cheryl N. Taylor and **Andrew Barclay** joined the board last fall, and **Michael Ross** was named early this year.

Ms. Taylor is production support manager for AGL Resources in Atlanta and oversees support for the company's numerous PeopleSoft systems for human resources, financials and related functions. She has more than 18 years' experience in telecommunications and information systems. Ms. Taylor replaced Lisa M. Beale.

Mr. Barclay is a full-time volunteer technical consultant, providing technology and statistical support to Georgia nonprofit and government

agencies. He has worked in the computer field for 23 years in both the for-profit and public sectors. Mr. Barclay replaced Freeman Walker.

Mr. Ross is President and Chief Executive Officer of MHR International, an Atlanta-based management consulting firm specializing in program management, construction management, small business development and management information systems. He filled the position held by Sam Zamarripa, who resigned to seek elected office.

Meanwhile, two board members have been reappointed to three-year terms: **Wayne H. Lazarus**, Attorney, Lazarus and Carmichael, Atlanta; and **James D. Lester III**, Chief Information Officer, AFLAC, Inc., Columbus. ■

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